

## ***Alma Holley, U.S. Army Veteran, 1979 – 2009***



When decorated Veteran Alma Holley reflects on her 30 years of service in the United States Army, she can't help but to admit, "If I had to do it all over again, I wouldn't change a thing."

Born in Wilson, North Carolina, the youngest of 31 grandchildren, Holley grew up surrounded by relatives in the military. After turning 18, she was determined to make the military her next step. In 1979, Holley enlisted into the Army, spending the next three decades providing Soldiers and others with what she proudly calls "*basic nursing*, caring for people and giving them the will to live."

Recalling her deployment to Tikrit, Iraq, in 2007, she reveals the story of a patient who epitomizes her military experience. A Sheikh working to aid America's efforts in the fight against terrorists, he was a double amputee, suffering from a third blast. A fairly recluse man, Holley was the unwavering force that stood by his side as he healed. Once her tour was over, she asked him, why not leave Iraq and go to the U.S. when he knows another attempt on his life will be made? "I can't," he explained to her, "If I leave, they will take over and win." He was willing to lay down his life and displayed true love for his country. To Holley, *that* was the reason they were all there.

Originally joining the Washington DC VA Medical Center in 1999, Holley serves as a Clinical Nurse Leader and Nurse Manager for the 3E Medical-Surgical Ward. A Veteran with genuine humility, a Certificate of Appreciation along with an American Flag that was flown above the skies of Iraq in 2008 was presented to the Medical Center on behalf of Holley in recognition of its commitment to Veterans.

She has also excelled academically, holding a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from UNC-Chapel Hill, a Master of Public Health degree from Tulane University, and several certifications in case management, clinical nurse leadership, and health analytics.

When asked what advice she has for young African Americans looking to follow in her footsteps, she shares, "My sense of self, my family, my belief in God, my education, and the ability to take care of myself...these are things that no one else can control. Build those things that no one can take from you, and remember that you stand on the shoulders of giants."